

Written Testimony of Lloyd O. Pierson

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Prospects for Peace in Darfur

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Introduction

Good morning, Mr. Chairman, and Members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to be here today to testify on Sudan. My colleague, Assistant Secretary Jendayi Frazer, has covered the political and security aspects of the U.S. Government policy in Sudan. My testimony seeks to summarize the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) response to the crises in Sudan and plan for the future.

Peace agreements in Darfur and Southern Sudan present USAID with the challenge of translating the political settlements of power brokers into improved lives for all Sudanese citizens. Sudan has been at war for the majority of its 50 years of independence. Its infrastructure is decimated, unable to serve its resident populations, much less the millions who hope to return to their homes as peace takes hold. At this critical time, USAID must not only continue to provide extensive, life-saving assistance to Sudan's most vulnerable people, but also assist the Sudanese in their transition to a stable, secure country that serves its citizens equitably and ably.

The signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the Darfur Peace Agreement have ushered in a new era of American assistance to Sudan. USAID assistance was less than \$200 million in fiscal year (FY) 2003. In FY 2005, USAID oversaw obligations of more than \$855 million, including USDA's Bill Emerson Humanitarian Trust food aid, making it the USAID's largest and most complex program in Sub-Saharan Africa. In Darfur, USAID has been a leader in the massive international assistance program, providing extensive humanitarian and food aid, working to ensure humanitarian access, and preparing for eventual reconstruction. In Southern Sudan, USAID provides an integrated program of humanitarian and reconstruction assistance that is helping to strengthen the foundation of the peace agreement. In Eastern Sudan, where malnutrition and maternal mortality rates are among the highest in the country, USAID funds general food rations, supplementary and therapeutic feeding, and food-for-work activities. USAID also provides food aid to more than 80,000 vulnerable women, children, and the elderly in camps around Khartoum.

To allow more direct management of our massive countrywide program, USAID is reestablishing its mission in Sudan, and we have posted a director to Khartoum. Mission staff will be located in Khartoum and the southern city of Juba. USAID also will maintain a field presence in Darfur.

Darfur

On May 5, 2006, Sudan's Government of National Unity and the main faction of the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army signed a historic peace agreement to bring an end to conflict in the Darfur region. The conflict has raged since 2003, and the resulting violence affects an estimated 3.8 million people, more than 2 million of whom have been driven from their homes. This peace agreement has finally brought some hope to Darfur's people by addressing their long-standing marginalization and charting a path for lasting peace.

USAID has been a leader in the humanitarian effort in Darfur and the rest of Sudan. In FY 2005, USAID oversaw obligations of nearly \$467 million to Darfur-including \$347 million in food aid, \$108 million in other humanitarian assistance, and \$11.6 million toward conflict resolution. Each USAID activity aims to support life-saving interventions, protect civilians, and promote conditions for recovery. Twenty partners implement USAID programs in Darfur in a variety of sectors, including health and nutrition, food security and agriculture, water and sanitation,

emergency supplies, income generation, and community and infrastructure rehabilitation.

Food assistance is illustrative of USAID's commitment to Sudan. This month, because contributions from other donors to the UN World Food Program (WFP) have not kept pace with Darfur's continuing need due to violence and displacement, WFP was forced to halve food rations to the region. In response, USAID is immediately shipping 47,600 metric tons of food, valued at \$48 million, to help restore full rations later in the summer. This rapid response was made in addition to our current contributions, which are sizable. Over the last six months, the United States has provided 85 percent of contributions received by WFP, and the pending supplemental appropriations bill contains provisions for \$225 million in food aid for Sudan, including \$150 million for Darfur, that would allow the United States to meet half of WFP's total 2006 appeal for Sudan.

Despite these actions, immediate gaps in food assistance will remain. The Government of National Unity and other major donors must continue to stand with the United States in helping alleviate the suffering of people in Darfur. To lessen the need for emergency food assistance, it is essential to improve food security. In North Darfur's camps, 83 percent of residents relied on agriculture for income before they were driven from their homes. Now, because of scarce resources and expanding populations, only 4 percent are able to earn money farming. USAID is working with residents of the camps and surrounding communities to create crop-sharing partnerships that benefit both groups. The initiative has not only improved agricultural yields in the area, but also helped reduce conflict between host communities and displaced people.

Strong communities are a necessary element of sustainable peace. USAID is supporting reconciliation efforts throughout Darfur that minimize tensions among displaced people and host communities by improving local capacity and supporting livelihood development. Young men and women in Darfur's camps are learning trades and vocational skills, like sewing and shoe-making, that improve their ability to generate income for their families.

Our initiatives aim to meet needs that cross sectors. One USAID activity trains midwives in South Darfur -which not only creates a source of income for the midwives, but also provides residents a much-needed service and improves maternal and child health. Our fuel-efficient stove program lowers the risk of violent attacks on women by reducing the amount of firewood they have to collect outside the relative safety of their camps. At the same time, fuel-efficient stoves improve family health by producing less smoke than traditional stoves, and they are easily and cheaply constructed by camp residents.

USAID has provided skills training to more than 67,000 displaced people in Darfur, including 700 community health workers. We have supported the construction of more than 16,000 latrines in Darfur, and our water and sanitation programs benefit 5 million people countrywide. Due to the timely provision of humanitarian assistance, overall global acute malnutrition rates fell from nearly 22 percent in September 2004 to less than 8 percent today. To chart the course for the future, USAID will participate in the Joint Assessment Mission (JAM) for Darfur. This will build on the 14-month JAM process carried out by the World Bank and United Nations in support of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement that resulted in a detailed assessment of recovery and development needs. The framework focused on key themes crucial to consolidating North-South peace and facilitating broad-based human and economic development. USAID programs support the JAM's priorities and bolster the CPA by addressing the underlying structural causes of conflict and underdevelopment.

The Darfur Peace Agreement calls for a similar JAM process, with two phases: recovery and reconstruction. The United Nations is leading the first phase to determine and assess Darfur's immediate needs, then develop a preliminary action plan to take place alongside ongoing humanitarian assistance. Planning for the second phase, focusing on development and reconstruction, has also begun, led by the World Bank and African Development Bank. Efforts will be coordinated at a Netherlands-hosted donors' conference at The Hague in early October. USAID is actively engaged in planning and will be deeply involved in implementation of recovery and reconstruction efforts. At the same time, USAID and the State Department are discussing a coordinated U.S. reconstruction strategy for Darfur, which will initially coexist with ongoing humanitarian efforts.

However, no progress can be made while the operating environment remains so precarious. Humanitarian operations in Darfur have been inhibited by ongoing violence and government obstructionism. Military operations, factional fighting, ethnic conflicts, banditry, lawlessness, and janjaweed actions all put the flow of assistance in jeopardy, and humanitarian organizations are increasingly targets of attacks on compounds and vehicles. In December, these factors led the United Nations to suspend non-lifesaving programs in central and northern West Darfur, leaving only 47 percent of the population accessible to humanitarian agencies. Accessibility rates were higher elsewhere in Darfur -87 percent in North Darfur and 82 percent in South Darfur-but open conflict persists in all three states. While the largest military faction has signed on to the Darfur Peace Agreement, as the Assistant Secretary has said, much work needs to be done on the ground to bring an end to the violence, displacement, and

fear that continues to plague the people of the region.

In addition, the Sudanese government has resumed placing burdensome bureaucratic requirements on NGOs. Aid organizations are now subject to lengthy visa renewal processes, travel permit requirements, interference in staff hiring, fuel embargoes, and requests for internal financial information. A new bill requires all NGOs to clear project proposals, including funding levels and sources, through a Sudanese government system. The Sudanese government often uses outright harassment, including imprisonment, against victims, witnesses, and community leaders who report human rights violations.

With these constraints, can peace in Darfur become a reality? President Bush said, "we are still far away from our ultimate goal... but now we can see a way forward." The agreement offers Darfur's people the first signs hope that peace may finally be attainable. It also brings great expectations that positive signs of recovery, security, and development emerge as soon as possible. USAID aims to help Darfur's people achieve that goal through both our larger programs, like food assistance, and our smaller programs, like the Violence Against Women initiative.

As villages were razed and homes destroyed throughout Darfur, many women were forced to flee with only the clothes on their backs. As time passed, their clothes became worn and threadbare. Unaccustomed to such immodesty, many women and girls resorted to conducting their chores and daily activities during the evening hours, under the cover of darkness, when the risk of assault was at its greatest. USAID worked with a local organization to procure and distribute 76,000 traditional dresses throughout Darfur's camps. These women and girls can now move around during the day without shame. All it took was a bit of adequate clothing to restore a measure of safety and dignity to so many people who have had to go without for so long.

Whether it is through agriculture, training, or even just basic clothing, USAID will continue to support the needs of Darfur's people as they take the next steps toward peace.

Southern Sudan

Two decades before violence consumed Darfur, a civil war erupted between Sudan's north and south. On January 9, 2005, the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), officially ending Africa's longest running civil war. During the two-decade conflict fighting, famine, and disease killed more than 2 million people and forced more than 4 million from their homes, creating the largest population of internally displaced people in the world. The CPA ended the devastating North-South violence and provided for a new constitution and protocols for power sharing, wealth sharing, security.

However, as in Darfur, the CPA also brought with it high expectations from the Sudanese people. Millions who were driven from their homes and millions more ex-combatants and orphans must be reintegrated into communities with weak institutions and infrastructure. Inter- and intra-ethnic tensions over power and natural resources persist. Joint integrated forces have not been established. And the nascent Government of Southern Sudan lacks the institutional capacity and structures required to respond to the needs of its citizens with roads, schools, hospitals, and water and sewage systems, and an end to insecurity.

To address these challenges, USAID is working with new government entities to forge a path to development. USAID reconstruction programs in Southern Sudan are integrated with humanitarian programs to help reduce suffering, promote stability, and mitigate the causes of conflict. Every activity seeks to build human and institutional capacity, increase access to accurate and reliable information, and cultivate systems for good governance and infrastructure development. Our efforts support the implementation of the CPA and seek to reduce risks that could put peace in jeopardy.

To assist in the establishment of a transparent and accountable government in Southern Sudan, USAID is working to improve the capacity of key ministries and supporting the development of political parties and civil society. Creating a legal framework for the Southern government, developing structures that minimize corruption, and completing a national census will also enhance governance. Our programs work to build understanding about the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, inform citizens of their roles and responsibilities, cultivate a peaceful dialogue, and establish an independent media. To increase access to basic health services, USAID trains county medical officers and conducts national immunization days and polio eradication campaigns. HIV/AIDS prevention activities, especially targeting high-risk areas, promote changes in behavior and voluntary testing and counseling. Our support for economic recovery in southern Sudan aims to improve agricultural practices, promote exports, and empower community-driven development.

Education is another area of focus-and one that will be key to overcoming past conflicts and building toward the future. The legacy of inequality and exclusion that drove the North-South conflict also marked the broken, rudimentary schools of the South. Education never reached the majority of the Southern Sudanese, and schools were erratically run by missionaries or the central government. Over the last four years, USAID has worked with dedicated Sudanese to create the first ever unified curriculum for Southern Sudan, which will for the first time enable schools to teach standard themes from standard materials that are equitable and accessible. To support the curriculum, USAID is rehabilitating schools, developing educational materials, training teachers, and mobilizing communities to get involved with their local schools. Our activities aim to cultivate local ownership of vital institutions - and develop the local capacity to sustain those institutions over the long term.

Conclusion

Sudan stands at a critical juncture. Peace agreements create hope, but they also create challenges. We and others in the international community are excited at the prospect of pursuing security and stability, for the good of both Sudan and the broader region.

In conclusion, I would like to thank you, Mr. Chairman, and members of the Committee for your continued interest, and for all the work and support that you have dedicated to Sudan and the region. Thank you, as well, for this opportunity to share USAID's commitment to Sudan's future.

I welcome your questions on my testimony or any others you might have for me at this time.